

avoid the costs and consequences of trying to crawl back through the legislative process or, worse, build simply a project that we know will fail.

As we watch the flooding that is about to occur this spring across the country, I hope that we will think about how the Federal Government needs to be a more constructive partner for livable communities. I strongly urge my colleagues to join the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST) and me in the sponsorship of H.R. 1186.

#### VACATION OF SPECIAL ORDER AND GRANTING OF SPECIAL ORDER

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from California (Mr. CALVERT).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. FOSSELLA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOSSELLA. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to bring to the attention of the American people what I think is a great injustice that is occurring in our country. It is injustice that seeks to pit community against community, color against color and the American people against one another. It is an injustice that we are witnessing in my district in Staten Island, but it is injustice that I have little doubt we will be battling throughout the Nation before long.

The controversy centers around the seemingly innocuous-sounding policy advanced by the Environmental Protection Agency known as "environmental justice". In theory, this legal doctrine is supposed to reflect the notion that all communities, regardless of race or ethnicity, should share equally in the burdens and risks of environmental protection policies. It sounds reasonable, except, of course, until the theory is applied.

Over the years, the policy has been twisted like a pretzel, so that today, lawyers and activists now believe that different people deserve different treatment or, more precisely, that some people are more equal than others.

Earlier this month, for example, top Federal officials from the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and even the White House Council on Environmental Quality came to New York for a day-long tour of waste transfer stations in the South Bronx. They came to see for themselves and to hear the residents who claim that these facilities pose an

environmental injustice on their community.

Let me add that I have no problem with them going to the South Bronx.

The morning after the tour, the EPA and the White House Council on Environmental Quality organized an unprecedented 8-hour public hearing in which residents had the opportunity to voice their outrage over the existence of the transfer stations. At the conclusion of the event, and at a speed in which I have never seen the Federal Government act, the White House Council on Environmental Quality announced that it would undertake an environmental justice investigation in the South Bronx.

This is, quite possibly, the most clear-cut hypocrisy on the part of the EPA that I have ever witnessed. At its core, the doctrine of environmental justice defies the most fundamental American principles of equality and justice. Why? Because while the White House Council on Environmental Quality mobilized its top officials for a tour of the South Bronx, granted a predominantly minority community, it never considered traveling just a few miles to Staten Island, which just happens to be a predominantly white community, to see one of the most horrific examples and nightmares of the 20th century known as the Fresh Kills Landfill.

To me, Mr. Speaker, it was an insult to every resident of Staten Island and a slap in the face to the hard working people of my district, who have been burdened for 50 years by this 3,000 acre, 150-foot-high illegal garbage dump, the largest in the country. This facility is not only the largest in our country, but one of, so legend has, one of only two man-made structures visible from outer space.

Recognizing the absurdity of any investigation on waste disposal in New York without a full and comprehensive discussion of Fresh Kills, I filed my own complaint with the EPA for an environmental justice review on Staten Island. In the days since, the silence from the EPA and the White House Council on Environmental Quality has been deafening.

It should also not be forgotten that for the South Bronx and every other borough in New York City, waste would be continually moving through transfer stations en route to a destination out of state, whereas at the Fresh Kills Landfill the trash literally sits and rots in our community forever.

The EPA and the White House Council on Environmental Quality failed to see the hypocrisy of fighting tooth and nail against a waste transfer station or transfer stations in the South Bronx because it would be located in a minority community but, at the same time, requiring a community like Staten Island to accept nearly 10 billion pounds of garbage every year.

Let there be no mistake. If the EPA or a State or local agency finds a par-

ticular facility poses a health risk to a community, the agency should mitigate or eliminate that risk, regardless, regardless, of the race or ethnicity of the residents of the neighborhood. But a governmental policy that takes skin color into account does not do justice, environmental or otherwise, to Americans, nor should it be funded with our tax dollars.

The fact is that 234 billion, I say billion, pounds of raw garbage is no less offensive because it sits rotting in a community that is predominantly white. I believe this country stands for equality for all. If something adversely affects someone, it does not matter if they are black, Hispanic or white. If it is bad for one, it is bad for all.

It may come as a surprise to advocates of environmental justice, but thousands of Staten Islanders of all races and ethnicities live within one mile of the Fresh Kills Landfill. Much like me, they do not see color when looking at garbage, they just see trash, and they know hypocrisy when they smell it.

#### EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GOSS).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Colorado?

There was no objection.

#### MY COMMITMENT TO CROP INSURANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, low commodity prices, disease and weather-related problems, coupled with declining export opportunities and weak demand, have taken a devastating toll on Colorado's agriculture industry. Farm income has fallen dramatically over the past 2 years, and it is difficult to predict how soon it might rebound. While Congress recently helped stave off disaster in rural America, with an emergency assistance package, it is evident gaping holes exist in federal crop insurance as a viable safety net.

In 1996, Congress passed the Freedom to Farm Act, allowing producers the flexibility to adjust crop acreage in response to both economic and agroeconomic factors, while providing farms a safety net through market transition payments, loan rates, and crop insurance.

Recently, some have suggested Congress return to the old system of deficiency payments and production quotas, and take action to increase loan rates and extended loan maturities in order to improve low commodity prices.